Who are included in the Ahl al-Bayt ?

It has been shown that the Family of the Prophet (s) – interchangeably referred to as the *Ahl al-Bayt*, *'Itrah* and *Aal* - included his daughter Fatima al-Zahra', her husband Imam 'Ali, and their children Imams al-Hasan and al-Husayn ('a). The members of this Family of five, with the Prophet Muhammad (s) at its head, were the ones alive at the time the Qur'anic verses regarding their virtue were being revealed to the Prophet (s). However, nine other Imams from the descendants of Imam al-Husayn ('a) are also in this chosen Family, the final one being Imam al-Mahdi ('a). The Prophet (s) said:

- "I and 'Ali and al-Hasan and al-Husayn and **nine of the descendants of al-Husayn** are the purified ones and the inerrant." [al-Juwayni, *Fara'id al-Simtayn*, (Beirut, 1978), page 160. Note that al-Juwayni's greatness as a scholar of hadith has been attested by al-Dhahabi in *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*, volume 4, page 298, and also by Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani in *al-Durar al-Kaminah*, volume 1, page 67]
- "I am the chief of the Prophets and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib is the chief of successors, and after me my successors shall be twelve, the first of them being 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and the last of them being al-Mahdi." [al-Juwayni, *Fara'id al-Simtayn*, page 160]
- "Al-Mahdi is one of us **Ahl al-Bayt**" and "al-Mahdi will be of my family, of the descendants of Fatima" [Ibn Majah, *al-Sunan*, volume 2, page 519, numbers 4085-6; Abu Dawud, *al-Sunan*, volume 2, page 207]

What about the Wives of the Prophet (s) ?

The verse of purification "*Verily Allah only desires to ...* " was revealed to the Prophet (s) in the house of his wife Umm Salama (may Allah be pleased with her); the Prophet called al-Hasan, al-Husayn, Fatima and 'Ali, and he gathered them together and covered them with the mantle. Then he said, "**O Allah, these are my Ahl al-Bayt, so keep away every impurity from the Ahl al-Bayt, and purify them with a perfect purification**." Umm Salama said, "Am I with them, O Apostle of Allah?" The Prophet (s) said, "**You stay in your place, and you are virtuous**."

- al-Tirmidhi, *al-Sahih*, volume 5, pages 351 and 663
- al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, *al-Mustadrak `ala al-Sahihayn*, volume 2, page 416. He states that it is *sahih* in accordance with the criteria of al-Bukhari
- al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Manthur*, volume 5, page 197

The beginning of verse 33:33 and subsequent statements are addressed to the wives of the Prophet (s) as is evident from the feminine pronouns used. However, in the verse of purification, the gender changes to the masculine or mixed gender. This also shows that it was an independent revelation addressed to different individuals.

Find out more about authentic Islam as explained by the Ahl al-Bayt, visit:

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Verily Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O People of the House **(Ahl al-Bayt)** *and to purify you a thorough purifying*
[Verse of Purification from Qur'an 33:33]

Prophet Muhammad (s) was asked by his Companions:
"How should we invoke blessings for you?" … He said:
"Say: '*O Allah! Send Your blessings on Muhammad and the Family of Muhammad, as You sent Your blessings on Abraham and on the Family of Abraham, for You are the Most Praiseworthy, the Most Glorious.*'"
[*Sahih al-Bukhari*, volume 4, book 55, number 589]

Why Follow the Family of the Prophet (s)?

The Shi'ah believe that the twin legacy of Prophet Muhammad (s) is the Qur'an and the *Ahl al-Bayt* (specific members of his family). The *Ahl al-Bayt* are the source for the authentic *Sunnah* of the Prophet (s). Only by obtaining instruction from ***both*** these sources can a Muslim hope to attain true guidance.

Prophet Muhammad's Legacy

"I am about to answer the call (of death). Verily, I leave behind two precious things (*thaqalayn*) amongst you: the Book of Allah and my Ahl al-Bayt. Verily, the two will never separate until they come back to me by the side of the Pond."

This authentic *hadith* from the Prophet Muhammad (s) is narrated by over 30 of his Companions and recorded by a large number of Sunni scholars. Some of the famous sources for this *hadith* include:

- al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, *al-Mustadrak `ala al-Sahihayn* (Beirut), volume 3, pages 109-110, 148, and 533). He expressly states that the tradition is *sahih* in accordance with the criteria of al-Bukhari and Muslim; al-Dhahabi has confirmed his judgement
- Muslim, *al-Sahih*, (English translation), book 031, numbers 5920-3
- al-Tirmidhi, *al-Sahih*, volume 5, pages 621-2, numbers 3786 and 3788; volume 2, page 219
- al-Nasa'i, *Khasa'is'Ali ibn Abi Talib*, hadith number 79
- Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, volume 3, pages 14, 17, 26; volume 3, page 26, 59; volume 4, page 371; volume 5, pages 181-2, 189-190
- Ibn al-'Athir, *Jami` al-'usul*, volume 1, page 277
- Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wa al-nihayah*, volume 5, page 209. He quotes al-Dhahabi and declares this *hadith* to be *sahih*.
- Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim* , volume 6, page 199
- Nasir al-Din al-Albani, *Silsilat al-Ahadith al-Sahiha* (Kuwait: al-Dar al-Salafiyya), volume 4, pages 355-8. He lists many chains of narration that he considers reliable.

There are many more sources for this *hadith* than it is possible to list here.

Didn't the Prophet (s) say "I leave behind the Book of God and my Sunnah" ?

This is a popular misconception. The fact is that there is no reliable basis for this statement attributed to the Prophet's (s) Final Sermon. **It is completely absent from any of the six *Sihah* books!!** The version in Malik's *Muwatta'*, Ibn Hisham's *Sirat Rasul Allah*, and from him in al-Tabari's *Ta'rikh*, **all suffer from incomplete chains of narration** with several links in the chain missing! The other versions that have a full chain of narration (*isnad*) - of which there are very few - **all contain narrators that are unanimously considered to be highly unreliable** by leading Sunni scholars of *rijal*. These remarkable facts can be confirmed by those interested in research by referring to the relevant books.

Clearly, no one is suggesting that the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (s) should not be followed. As stated before, the Prophet (s) wished for the Muslims to refer to his Ahl al-Bayt as a reliable, pure and inerrant source for his *Sunnah*.

What is so special about the Family of the Prophet (s) ?

When the verse *"(O Muhammad) Say, 'I do not ask for any reward for this (bringing of Allah's message) except the love for the near kinship.'"* (42:23) was revealed, the Muslims asked the Prophet: "Who are these near kin of yours whose love is obligatory upon us?" **He replied, "'Ali, Fatima, and their two sons.**"

- al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, *al-Mustadrak `ala al-Sahihayn*, volume 2, page 444
- al-Qastallani*, Irshad al-Sari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, volume 7, page 331
- al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Manthur*, volume 6, pages 6-7
- al-Alusi al-Baghdadi, *Ruh al-Ma'ani*, volume 25, pages 31-2

The position of truthfulness and virtue of the Ahl al-Bayt was further confirmed by the Qur'an during the disputation with the Christians of Najran. When the verse was revealed "*But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our near people and your near people, then let us be earnest in prayer, and pray for the curse of Allah on the liars.*" (3:61), **the Prophet (s) called 'Ali, Fatima, al-Hasan and al-Husayn and said: 'O Allah, these are my Family (*Ahli*)**'.

- Muslim, *al-Sahih*, (English translation), book 031, number 5915
- al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, *al-Mustadrak `ala al-Sahihayn*, volume 3, page 150. He states that it is *sahih* in accordance with the criteria of al-Bukhari and Muslim
- Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *Fath al-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, volume 7, page 60
- al-Tirmidhi, *al-Sahih*, kitab al-manaqib, volume 5, page 596
- Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, volume 1, page 185
- al-Suyuti, *History of Khalifas Who Took The Right Way*, (London, 1995), page 176

Isn't it enough to show respect towards the Ahl al-Bayt ?

Is it sufficient to just show respect towards the Qur'an? Surely the Muslims have no choice but to follow it, as a source of Divine guidance, in *all* their affairs. The Prophet Muhammad (s) left two things as legacy to the Muslims, and promised that they will never separate from each other until the Day of Judgement. **By twinning the Ahl al-Bayt with the Qur'an, the Prophet (s) was telling us to not only show respect towards them, but also to take explanations of Islamic doctrine, practices, *hadith* and *tafsir* from them.**

"**Behold! My Ahl al-Bayt are like the Ark of Noah. Whoever embarked on it was saved, and whoever turned away from it perished**"

- al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, *al-Mustadrak `ala al-Sahihayn*, volume 3, p. 151 and volume 2, page 343. He states that it is *sahih* in accordance with the criteria of Muslim
- al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Manthur*, volume 1, pages 71-72
- Ibn Hajar al-Makki, *al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa*, page 140. He states that this tradition has come down through many chains of narration that strengthen each other.